

Message Text

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15

ACTION INT-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 EB-11 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-09

NSAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 /041 W

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R 230445 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3330

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 3307

FOR BUMINES -- WILLIAM WOOD

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: EMIN IN

SUBJECT: JITPUR COAL MINE DISASTER

REF: A) COMMERCIAL TELEGRAM, WOOD TO SWEETWOOD; MARCH 21, 1973

B) NEW DELHI 9040, JULY 20, 1972

1. THE GOVERNMENT- OWNED BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED' S
JITPUR COLLIERY AT NOONOIDIH, NEAR DHANBAD, BIHAR, SUFFERED
SERIES OF UNDERGROUND EXPLOSIONS SUNDAY MARCH 18. INITIAL
EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE AT 2000 HOURS AT LEVEL OF 1,500 FEET BELOW
SURFACE IN A CURRENTLY- OPERATED WORKING PLACE. SEVERE
ACCUMULATION
OF METHANE GAS HAS BEEN REPORTED AS PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF DISASTER.

2. JITPUR MINE IS ONE OF EASTERN INDIA' S LARGEST SINGLE
UNDERGROUND COAL MINES, WITH AVERAGE DAILY OUTPUT OF 1,150
METRIC TONS. THE MINE IS CAPTIVE SUPPLIER OF COKING COAL TO
PUBLIC SECTOR INDIAN IRON AND STEEL COMPANY' S (IISCO)
BURNPUR, WEST BENGAL, PLANT. (IISCO WAS NATIONALIZED BY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN JULY 1972; REF B.) MINABLE SEAMS AVERAGE
6-8 FEET, ARE FLAT- LYING, AND ARE MINED BY BOTH HAND AND
MECHANIZED METHODS. THIS MINE NORMALLY OPERATES THREE SHIFTS
DAILY, WITH ABOUT 630 MEN UNDERGROUND PER SHIFT. TOTAL MINE
EMPLOYMENT: 2,700 SURFACE AND UNDERGROUND. AT TIME OF
EXPLOSION (AN INDIAN HOLIDAY), 102 MEN WERE ON DUTY, REPORTEDLY
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ASSIGNED ONLY TO UNDERGROUND MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. OF THIS TOTAL, LATEST UNCONFIRMED REPORTS STATE THAT 16 WORKERS HAD RETURNED TO SURFACE MINUTES BEFORE EXPLOSION, 39 WERE RESCUED AFTER EXPLOSION, AND 47 WERE KILLED.

3. GOI ANNOUNCED MARCH 21 THAT DIRECTOR- GENERAL, MINES SAFETY, HAS INITIATED FULL SCALE INVESTIGATION. EMBASSY WILL REPORT PERTINENT DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY OCCUR, AND WILL TRANSMIT OFFICIAL GOI REPORT ON DISASTER WHEN AVAILABLE. MOYNIHAN

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NEWDE03307
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730334/aaaaibwc.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION INT
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 72 NEW DELHI 9040
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Nov-2001 by elbezefj>; APPROVED <07 FEB 2002 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971217
Subject: JITPUR COAL MINE DISASTER
TAGS: EMIN, IN
To: BOMBAY
CALCUTTA
INT
MADRAS
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

